

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4363

AMEMBASSY DACCA

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FOLG SENT ACTION DELHI INFO BOMBAY AND MADRAS RPTD FOR
YOUR INFO.

QUOTE.

CONFIDENTIAL CALCUTTA 1523

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: CPM MINISTRY IN WEST BENGAL ADOPTS MODERATE LINE,

BUT IS NOT WITHOUT PROBLEMS

1. IN FIRST STATEMENTS SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE NEW CPM GOVERNMENT IN WEST BENGAL HAS ADOPTED MODERATE STANCE. GOVERNOR'S SPEECH ON JUNE 24, OPENING LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SESSION SAID STATE GOVERNMENT WOULD ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURS TO OPEN NEW INDUSTRIES, BUT WARNED THAT A STRICT WATCH WOULD BE KEPT ON "LARGE HOUSES" TO SEE THAT THEY DID NOT HARM INTERESTS OF PEOPLE. STATE GOVERNMENT SAID IT WOULD COOPERATE WITH GOI TO ENSURE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, WOULD INVESTIGATE "POLITICAL MURDERS" AND OTHER CRIMES OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, AND WOULD ASK DELHI TO REPEAL MISA. IN OTHER FIELDS GOVERNOR SAID STATE GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE DIRECTION TO LAND REFORM, ENSURE PAYMENT OF
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MINIMUM AGRICULTURAL WAGE, HOLD DOWN PRICES, CONDUCT ELECTIONS TO MUNIMIPAL BODIES, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN HELD FOR MANY YEARS AND ABOLISH ANARCHY IN EDUCATION.

2. EVEN JYOTI BASU'S SPEECH TO MASS MEETING ON CALCUTTA MAIDAN ON JUNE 26 WAS QUITE MILD FOR SUCH AN OCCASION. HE IS QUOTED IN PRESS AS SAYING, "CLASS DIFFERENCES AND CON-

FLICTS ARE NATURAL IN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY. IN THE INTEREST OF WEST BENGAL'S ECONOMY WE WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT THESE CONFLICTS DO NOT INTENSIFY. BUT OUR EFFORTS WILL FAIL IF THE BOURGEOISIE DOES NOT BEHAVE, IF IT STICKS TO ITS WAYS OF EXPLOITATION. THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IS THE ULTIMATE WEAPON IN THE HANDS OF THE WORKING CLASS AND WE CANNOT ASK IT TO GIVE IT UP. I HOPE INDUSTRIALISTS WILL SEE TO IT THAT THE NEED TO USE THAT WEAPON DOES NOT ARISE." DIRECTING HIS REMARKS TO CAPITALISTS AND BIG INDUSTRIALISTS, BASU REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE HAD OFTEN TOLD THEM THAT "WE WANT MILLS AND FACTORIES TO RUN SMOOTHLY, THAT WE WANT MORE INVESTMENTS TO BE MADE IN THEM FOR THEIR EXPANSION AND PROPER MANAGEMENT, AND THAT WE WILL SETTLE ALL DISPUTES SPEEDILY BY DIRECT TALKS WITH THE MANAGEMENT." HE SAID HE WOULD MEET WITH INDUSTRIALISTS AND TRADERS TO SEEK THEIR VIEWS ON VARIOUS PROBLEMS.

3. ELSEWHERE IN SPEECH BASU BLAMED WHOLE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR PROBLEMS NOW BEING ENCOUNTERED IN RUNNING EXAMINATIONS, BUT SAID "IN THE MEANTIME, COPYING AND DISRUPTION OF EXAMINATIONS MUST STOP." BASU SAID THAT RESTRAINT WOULD BE "A WAY OF LIFE" WITH CPM AND SAID PARTY WOULD PROTECT POLITICAL RIGHTS OF ITS OPPONENTS.

4. DESPITE RAIN DURING MOST OF THE DAY, MEETING WAS REPORTEDLY WELL ATTENDED. CROWD ESTIMATES RUN TO ABOUT 200,000
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--STILL SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW 500,000 WHO ATTENDED LAST LEFTIST RALLY IN LATE APRIL. CROWD WAS WELL DISCIPLINED, AND PROCESSIONS HEADING FOR MEETING KEPT TO SIDE OF ROADS TO AVOID INTERFERENCE WITH TRAFFIC.

5. BASU WAS ALSO APPARENTLY QUITE CONCILIATORY IN MEETING WITH LEADERS OF BENGAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. ACCORDING TO ONE OF CHAMBER OFFICIALS PRESENT, HE SAID GOVERNMENT WOULD WORK WITH BUSINESS IF IT WOULD COOPERATE WITH NEW GOVERNMENT. BASU SAID HE PLANNED TO MEET WITH BUSINESSMEN SHORTLY TO ASK FOR THEIR SUGGESTIONS. HE IS ALSO QUOTED AS HAVING TOLD AN INTERVIEWER, "AS I REALIZE THAT I WILL HAVE TO WORK WITH THE CAPITALISTS, THEY SHOULD ALSO REALIZE THAT I HAVE COME TO STAY."

6. ALL IS NOT SMOOTH SAILING FOR CPM GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, A MAJOR SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR PARTY, ARE SAID TO BE UNHAPPY ABOUT SPEECH BY NEW FINANCE MINISTER, ASHOKE MITRA, IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT FOR "PROFLIGATE, UNAUTHORIZED EXPENDITURE" ESPECIALLY IN ITS LAST MONTHS IN OFFICE. SINCE MUCH OF THIS MONEY WENT FOR INCREASED PAY TO CIVIL SERVANTS, THEY FEAR

THAT NEW GOVERNMENT MAY REVOKE INCREASES. IT IS SAID THAT THEY DID NOT ATTEND MAIDAN MEETING IN LARGE NUMBERS.

7. OTHER IMMEDIATE PROBLEM FACING STATE IS WIDESPREAD CHEATING AND VIOLENCE AT UNIVERSITY EXAMS. SEVERAL EXAMS, INCLUDING SOME IN MEDICINE HAD TO BE CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LARGE-SCALE CHEATING, AND PROCTOR WAS REPORTEDLY ASSAULTED DURING AN EXAMINATION IN NORTH CALCUTTA. AS NOTED ABOVE CHIEF MINISTER HAS TAKEN STRONG LINE AGAINST CHEATING AND DISTURBANCES, AND POLICE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR PROCTORS WHO WILL SEARCH EXAMINEES BEFORE THEY ENTER HALLS TO PREVENT THEIR CARRYING NOTES WITH THEM.

8. CPM IS GETTING A TASTE OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF POWER,
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BUT THUS FAR PROBLEMS ARE MINOR. MOST ASSESSMENTS OF NEW GOVERNMENT REMAIN QUITE POSITIVE.
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